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Summary record of the 12th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Wednesday, 24 October 2012, at 3 p.m.

Chair: Mr. Messone ..... (Gabon)

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Agenda item 55: Questions relating to information (*continued*)

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12-56657 (E)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Agenda item 55: Questions relating to information (*continued*) (A/C.4/67/21; A/67/62 and A/67/307)

1. **Mr. Mwinyi** (United Republic of Tanzania) said that the usefulness of the United Nations Radio service in Kiswahili, a language spoken by over 200 million people in Africa, was beyond doubt. However, increased staffing would enhance productivity and the quality and quantity of the information broadcast.

2. Given the importance of the activities of the United Nations information centres, any further rationalization of the network of information centres should be undertaken on a case-by-case basis, in consultation with the Member States where they were located.

3. **Mr. Hamed** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that his delegation looked forward to a new world information order that would be more just, effective and responsive to the concerns of all peoples, instead of seeking to manipulate public opinion in the service of narrow political interests. The Department of Public Information (DPI) played an important role in reaching different regions of the world with the United Nations message of peace. Information was one of the most important tools at the international community's disposal, reflecting as it did the political, cultural and economic orientations of different societies. The revolution in modern communication media had so increased their impact that they no longer merely reported events but actually helped shape them. The negative role played by the media when they were not objective, however, could spread a culture of violence rather than of peace. Information must be conveyed impartially, free from politicization, distortion and falsification. In that connection, it was regrettable that some States had blocked the broadcasting of Syrian satellite channels, in flagrant violation of the principles of journalistic ethics and free access to information recognized by the World Summit on the Information Society, held in Geneva in 2003.

4. The DPI Special Information Programme on the Question of Palestine must be strengthened, given Israel's ongoing human rights violations in the occupied Palestinian territories, which included attacks against journalists and foreign peace activists. DPI must also achieve parity among the official languages of the United Nations and remedy the deficiencies of the Arabic-language website. Lastly, DPI could play an important role in encouraging dialogue and building understanding among cultures and peoples with a view to achieving such important goals as poverty eradication and decolonization.

5. **Mr. Diallo** (Senegal) said that although the countries of the South were rapidly embracing the new communications technologies, the United Nations should continue to support traditional means of communication, particularly radio. At the same time, the United Nations, development partners and concerned States should act to bridge the digital divide so that all countries reaped the benefits of information and communications technologies (ICT). His Government welcomed the frequent updates provided by the Special Information Programme on the Question of Palestine and noted that there were 63 United Nations information centres around the world, including one in Dakar, whose success depended largely on the quality and diversity of the products they offered. Lastly, multilingualism required constant support if the United Nations message was to reach all countries and peoples. He therefore encouraged the United Nations to bolster the human and other resources needed to bridge the linguistic divide in DPI and commended the interpretation, translation and verbatim reporting services provided by the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management.

6. **Mr. Iqbal** (Pakistan) urged DPI to allocate adequate resources to the United Nations information centres, particularly those in developing countries, and to consider restoring full services at the Islamabad Information Centre. The information centres were a vital source of information and helped bridge the digital divide between developed and developing countries. He welcomed DPI efforts to provide information materials and websites in local languages, as well as photos and live video coverage of United Nations meetings. As a major troop-contributing country, Pakistan urged DPI to continue working with the Departments of Peacekeeping Operations and Field Support to raise awareness of the realities, successes and challenges of peacekeeping operations. He emphasized the importance of accurate, objective and impartial news and information in print and on radio, television and the Internet and the need to strengthen technology, multilingualism and partnerships in those areas.

7. **Mr. Borje** (Philippines) said that although DPI had been successful in meeting the daunting challenge of the ICT needs of a diverse world and in making the United Nations more accessible, efforts should be made to bridge the digital divide. At the same time, the gaps in access to ICT in the world meant that traditional media remained a vital source of information for half the world's population.

8. His delegation welcomed the efforts made by United Nations information centres to establish partnerships with schools and civil society in order to step up information campaigns. Partnerships with educational institutions specializing in ICT and communication arts could harness the talents and energy of young people. The increased traffic to United Nations websites and press releases underscored the importance of United Nations news services, to which access could be improved by making content available in all six official languages. Such access should not, however, be at the expense of the integrity and impartiality of United Nations websites.

9. **Mr. Kyaw Zwar Minn** (Myanmar) acknowledged the efforts made by DPI in publicizing the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development and many other areas of United Nations activity. The United Nations information centres and DPI websites and programmes also played a vital role. Everyone should have access to the benefits of ICT, and DPI could help bridge the digital divide. As DPI was the public face and voice of the United Nations, Member States should give it stronger support.

10. Reviewing the media and information reforms taking place in Myanmar, he said that the Government had relaxed restrictions on domestic publications and was working to ensure freedom of the press, in the belief that a dynamic media sector was crucial for economic development, national reconciliation and Myanmar's integration in the international community.

11. **Mr. Wolfe** (Jamaica) said that the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons posed a threat to the survival of countries across the world, including in the Caribbean region. He therefore welcomed the communication strategy developed by DPI to publicize the recent United Nations Conference on the Arms Trade Treaty. He also welcomed the documentary produced by DPI to mark the thirtieth anniversary of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and urged it to also publicize the Third Global Conference of Small Island Developing States (SIDS), to be held in 2014, in order to highlight the particular vulnerabilities of SIDS Member States, especially to the effects of climate change. His Government commended DPI information and activities designed to garner support for the project to erect at the United Nations a permanent memorial to the victims of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade.

12. **Mr. Momen** (Bangladesh) said that his Government took pride in the fact that 109 Bangladeshi peacekeepers had died in United Nations service and would support any DPI effort to produce a publication or documentary on peacekeeping activities. Moreover, as a victim of the many frightening consequences of global climate change, Bangladesh urged DPI to spotlight the situation of developing countries faced with impending climate crisis, in order to mobilize international cooperation, support and preventive action.

13. His Government offered its assistance in publicizing International Mother Language Day. Commemoration of the Day must be more than a formality and promote awareness of cultural and linguistic diversity and the threat posed to many lesser-known languages by globalization and economic disintegration. In that connection, he noted that United Nations Radio broadcasts in Bangla, which had been popular with the over 300 million Bangla speakers around the world, had recently been discontinued. He urged their earliest possible resumption. Lastly, he welcomed the use by DPI of alternative media such as social networking sites to publicize anti-poverty and other campaigns.

14. **Mr. Ulibarri** (Costa Rica) said that freedom of expression and the full, free, transparent and multidirectional flow of information were indispensable for a healthy democracy and promoted development and creativity while helping to combat corruption. The United Nations must support the ability of traditional media to generate such information flows, while embracing the liberating potential of the new information and communications technologies (ICT). As part of efforts to achieve development, it was essential to reduce the digital divide both within and between countries. That required wise public investments in infrastructure, improved access, training and entrepreneurship. There were many countries with limited financial resources that, thanks to good policies, had made communications technologies more

accessible. However, there were also countries that, despite having the financial resources, had either failed to promote new media or had even censored them. The United Nations should support investments, multisectoral alliances, best practices and institution-building initiatives that would reduce the digital divide.

15. The United Nations must also enhance the effectiveness of its own communications. Despite a reduction in resources, DPI was achieving that goal through improved internal organization, better coordination within the United Nations system, the use of new technologies and the development of partnerships with the media, non-governmental organizations, academic institutions and civil society in general.

16. **Mr. Yeo Sho Hor** (Singapore) said that access to information was a key element of both economic and social development. While new media and communications technologies had brought benefits in that regard, including an improved ability to connect with new audiences, interpreting the vast pool of information that had become available required discernment, namely, the ability to separate fact from fiction while increasing the transparency of information. The speed at which news was disseminated through the new media could also exacerbate conflicts. At the same time, disparities in the availability of information persisted in different parts of the world, sometimes even within the same country, and such information gaps must be narrowed. The United Nations had a very important role to play in promoting and ensuring the accessibility of information for both the information-rich and the information-poor.

17. His Government was using social media to engage the population directly in serious discussions. In addition, it had embarked on a five-year plan to increase the reach and richness of its electronic services and enhance electronic communications with the country's citizens, including outreach to those who did not have computers or Internet access.

18. **Mr. Ruiz** (Colombia) said that, while DPI and the Secretariat had increased coverage of the work of the United Nations, it was becoming increasingly urgent to take the United Nations message to all segments of the population, in their respective languages, including in remote areas or areas where access to the new technologies was not readily available. That would require the implementation of innovative strategies, through national Governments and with the support of United Nations information centres, to involve local media and draw on the capacities of the academic sector and volunteer networks in each country.

19. The widening digital divide between developed and developing countries was cause for concern. Not only must current imbalances in access to the new information and communications technologies be corrected, but traditional media must continue to be used as well.

20. In March 2012, the Bogotá Information Centre had launched a nationwide radio programme that broadcast information about the United Nations and Colombian current affairs. It had also held 16 press conferences in 2012, on such topics as anti-personnel mines, the green economy and the International Year of Cooperatives, had updated its website, which in 2012 had received some 2,100,000 visits.

21. The United Nations information centres provided fundamental support to the work of DPI around the world. The potential impact on the centres of current budgetary constraints was therefore cause for concern. The Bogotá Information Centre served three countries and must continue to receive financial resources, expand its staff, if possible with the support of the United Nations Volunteers Programme, and upgrade its information technology systems so as to achieve sustainable results.

22. Since multilingualism was an inherent characteristic of the Organization's work, it was important to achieve linguistic parity among the six official languages, particularly in the case of press releases, which were often published in only one working language. His Government was committed to freedom of the press and freedom of expression and welcomed United Nations efforts to disseminate objective, accurate and consistent information in accordance with the principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

23. **Mr. Mashabane** (South Africa) said that, as the pre-eminent credible multilateral advocate for peace and justice, the United Nations must have a global voice. The DPI communication strategy should be central to the Organization's activities, as had been the case for the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development. He hoped that DPI would specifically

promote events focusing on regional matters, such as the Eighth African Development Forum and the 2012 African Economic Conference. He also encouraged DPI and the Fourth Committee jointly to explore possibilities for raising awareness of the Third International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism and commended the Special Information Programme on the Question of Palestine. United Nations information and communication activities in conflict and post-conflict situations could also play an important role in peacekeeping missions.

24. His delegation was mindful not only of the opportunities that ICT could offer for the poverty eradication, economic growth and social development, but also of the widening digital divide between developed and developing countries. DPI must ensure an equitable balance in the use of all available technologies. Traditional media remained important in many developing countries and it should continue using those outlets.

25. His delegation commended the work of the United Nations information centres, especially in developing countries, where the dissemination of information in local languages had the strongest impact. It also supported the decision to establish a United Nations information centre in Luanda to serve Portuguese-speaking African countries and hoped that it would soon become operational.

26. South Africa appreciated the support provided by DPI in 2012 in promoting Nelson Mandela International Day, an event that appealed to the international community to dedicate time to service for humanity. The network capacity of the United Nations information centres played a vital role in promoting the spirit and objectives of the international day across the world. His delegation was also encouraged by the efforts of the DPI Africa Section to increase online visibility and support for the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). In that connection, the *Africa Renewal* publication was invaluable in promoting awareness of the objectives of NEPAD.

27. **Mr. Pyvovarov** (Ukraine) said that there had been a significant increase in the quantity of information available globally and that managing it effectively was a challenge. Effective communication between the United Nations and the international community was very important for publicizing and ensuring the success of the Organization's work. A well-coordinated public information strategy was one of the key elements in the overall effectiveness of United Nations activities and he thanked DPI for its exemplary efforts in that regard. He noted that there had been an improvement in the Russian-language news service and commended the excellent work done to host journalists during the opening week of the current session of the General Assembly.

28. Information must be objective, reliable and credible, given its considerable influence on the adoption of strategic decisions that affected millions of lives. The conflict in Syria was a striking example of how the manipulation of information and misinformation could have grave consequences and complicate the search for a solution. His delegation called for an end to information wars and for transparency and objectivity in media coverage of events in Syria. United Nations organs must use only well-verified, reliable information in their work and disregard unconfirmed, provocative reporting.

29. Journalists sometimes risked their lives to report on world events. A Ukrainian journalist had been abducted recently in Syria and the Syrian Government was actively assisting efforts to find her. Ukraine advocated freedom of speech and a free press and believed that information was a powerful weapon that should be used solely to promote peace, democracy, prosperity and mutual respect and understanding.

30. **Mr. Nakamae** (Japan) expressed appreciation for the cooperation received from the DPI Outreach Division on the occasion of the commemoration of the first anniversary of the earthquake that had struck eastern Japan. His Government placed great importance on communicating the lessons learned from the earthquake and its disastrous effects. At a time of shrinking United Nations resources, partnerships played a valuable instrumental role in ensuring effective and timely information-sharing that achieved tangible results, not only for the general public, but also within the political arena.

31. His delegation commended DPI efforts to improve the quality of the United Nations website and expected efficiency and cost-effectiveness to be taken into account when determining whether to make site content available in all the official languages. At the same time, it encouraged the Department's efforts to engage with new media platforms and called on it to

continue enhancing the efficiency and transparency of its activities.

32. **Mr. Kanaan** (Observer for Palestine) reiterated the importance of the DPI Special Information Programme on the Question of Palestine, which enjoyed broad international support and was instrumental in raising the international community's awareness of the issue, thereby fostering support for efforts to achieve a just, lasting, comprehensive and peaceful solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict. DPI was also continuing to provide media assistance to the Palestinian people through its annual training programme for Palestinian broadcasters and journalists from the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

33. The Israeli occupying forces continued systematically to target journalists who were trying to convey the grim reality of Israel's aggressive and destructive policies and practices against defenceless Palestinian civilians, including its campaigns of arrest and detention and the use of rubber bullets, tear gas and stun grenades against journalists covering non-violent protests against Israel's confiscation of Palestinian land for settlements and the apartheid wall. On 28 September, a Serbian journalist had been injured and dozens of Palestinians and Israeli and foreign activists had suffered severe suffocation when Israeli occupying forces had suppressed a peaceful demonstration. At the same time, illegal Israeli settlers continued their acts of violence, harassment and intimidation against Palestinian and foreign journalists with total impunity, under the protection of the Israeli occupying forces. He urged the Committee to step up efforts to protect Palestinian and foreign journalists.

34. The Palestinian leadership believed that telecommunications and information technology played a vital role in the development process. Although Israel controlled the communications sector in Palestine, including the Palestinian frequency spectrum, thereby depriving the Palestinian people of direct access to communications services and information technology, the Palestinian leadership was working tirelessly to build ICT networks to help the Palestinian people overcome the geographical and physical impediments to normal life caused by the occupation. His delegation reaffirmed its commitment to a peace process that would end the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian Territory and enable the Palestinian people to exercise its inalienable rights, including the right of self-determination and the right of return in accordance with General Assembly resolution 194 (III) and the right to establish an independent State of Palestine and secure full membership in the United Nations, thereby taking its historical and rightful place among the community of nations.

Statements in exercise of the right of reply

35. **Ms. Abu** (Israel) said that it was absolutely absurd to hear the Syrian representative, a representative of a regime that slaughtered its own citizens on a daily basis, talk about human rights. She could also address the claims made by the Observer for Palestine by questioning his definition of non-violent protest or by discussing the treatment of Israeli journalists in the Territories administered by the Palestinian Authority and in Gaza. However, the discussion on the current agenda item was not the place to do so. There were several other items on the Committee's agenda dedicated to the Palestinian issue. Unfortunately, there were none to discuss the atrocities taking place in Syria.

36. **Mr. Hamed** (Syrian Arab Republic), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that the misinformation provided by the representative of the Israeli occupying Power was no surprise. The international community was accustomed to hearing such accusations whenever Syria criticized Israel's human rights violations in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. What was odd was that the representative of Israel should talk about human rights violations when everyone was aware that Israel had violated each and every human right. Israel had committed numerous violations against journalists and peace activists seeking to express their solidarity with the Palestinian people. Rachel Corrie, an American citizen killed by Israeli forces as she tried to prevent an Israeli bulldozer from destroying Palestinian homes in Rafah, had been killed for trying to convey the truth about Israel's inhumane practices. The killing of activists on board the Gaza Freedom Flotilla was another example of Israeli inhumanity.

The meeting rose at 5.10 p.m.

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Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee)

Summary record of the 13th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Thursday, 25 October 2012, at 3 p.m.

Chair: Mr. Felopoulos (Vice-Chair) ..... (Greece)
later: Mr. Messone (Chair) ..... (Gabon)

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Agenda item 55: Questions relating to information (*continued*)

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12-56812 (E)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

Agenda item 55: Questions relating to information (*continued*) (A/67/21 and A/67/307)

1. **Mr. O'Brien** (India) welcomed both the Secretary-General's report on "Questions relating to information" (A/67/307) and that of the Committee on Information (A/67/21). It was heartening to see that the Department of Public Information had collaborated with the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Department of Field Support in organizing a training workshop and an event to mark the International Day of United Nations Peacekeepers. The Department of Public Information should pursue those collaborative efforts to raise awareness of United Nations activities, such as the work carried out, often under extremely demanding circumstances, by United Nations peacekeepers in strife-torn lands.

2. The United Nations information centres played a crucial role in enhancing the public image of the United Nations and disseminating information, particularly in developing countries. The centres acted as an interface between the United Nations and local communities and should be strengthened further. His delegation urged the Department of Public Information to work closely with host countries in those efforts and supported the provision of adequate budgetary resources to ensure that information centres functioned effectively and also increased their collaboration with local community groups.

3. While it was important to capitalize on new information technology and social media to reach new audiences, it was also important to use the widest range of communication methods, from webcasts and podcasts to traditional means of communication such as radio, television and the print media. In the developing world in particular, radio was a major source of information and there was a need to raise awareness of its importance and enhance international cooperation to improve and diversify the content of radio broadcasts.

4. The Department was to be commended for its activities under the United Nations Academic Impact (UNAI) initiatives, in which it interacted with institutions of higher learning in order to strengthen United Nations ties with different global constituencies. UNAI events were an excellent example of creativity and innovation in advancing the goals of the United Nations. India had always been a committed contributor to UNAI and had recently co-sponsored an event as part of the "Unlearning Intolerance" programme. The United Nations had designated the University of Calcutta as an Academic Hub to develop expertise in peace and conflict-resolution studies.

5. **Mr. Orellana** (Guatemala) welcomed the two reports before the Committee, noting that the Department of Public Information played a vitally important role in publicizing and promoting the Organization's multiple activities and goals in an objective and impartial manner.

6. While his delegation recognized the importance of the new technologies and welcomed their use by the Department, it viewed with concern the digital divide that currently existed between developing and developed countries. The fact that many countries did not have access to the new technologies meant that traditional means of communication, such as radio, television and the print media, must be preserved. Since they remained the only way for many developing countries to obtain information, traditional media should also transmit information in as many languages as possible. Multilingualism was fundamental to the very existence of the United Nations and it was essential that there should be parity among the six official languages. The Department should give serious consideration to ways of reducing the linguistic divide that existed within the Organization.

7. His delegation welcomed the close cooperation between the Department of Public Information and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, which helped to increase understanding of peacekeeping missions. He was encouraged that the Department of Public Information was continuing to improve its dissemination of information, particularly in troop-contributing countries, on the multidimensional nature of peacekeeping operations.

8. Everyone had an obligation to protect the rights of freedom of the press and of expression, which not only empowered peoples but also forced authorities to be more accountable for their actions. Those rights must be exercised responsibly, within the parameters established by national laws and the relevant international instruments.

9. **Mr. Diaz Bartolome** (Argentina) commended the efforts made by the Department of Public Information

to develop new contents and use new technologies, while continuing to prioritize traditional means of communication. The work of the United Nations information centres should also continue to be supported, as they were key elements in disseminating the Organization's message. Argentina especially welcomed the work done by the Information Centre in Buenos Aires, which had been very active in the past year, organizing events and helping journalists produce news and special reports on the work of the United Nations and the specialized agencies.

10. His delegation supported the commitment of the Department to multilingualism, but was concerned that, once again, there was no mention of it in the Secretary-General's report, especially when the need for parity among the six official languages had been recognized. Information and disaggregated statistics on that issue should be provided, as had been the case in previous reports. Nor was any information provided on the use of local languages by information centres or the percentage of visits by language to the United Nations website.

11. While his delegation was pleased that the Department had expanded its use of social networks in all the official languages, it should always be remembered that such resources complemented the United Nations website, rather than replacing it, and were not therefore a solution to its increasing linguistic imbalance.

12. His Government was proud that the Universidad Nacional de Córdoba had been the first university in Latin America to enter into a cooperation agreement to expand and improve a range of the Department's online material, and it supported efforts to develop such cooperation with other academic institutions.

13. In terms of visits by language, the United Nations website in Spanish had again come second (15 per cent), after English (65 per cent). However, his delegation was concerned that there was far less content on the Spanish site than on the English one. The Department should be guided by its own statistics and adjust the linguistic content of the website to actual public demand. The same approach should be taken to United Nations webcasts, where coverage of the Main Committees was currently available in English only. He assumed that there would be no additional cost in providing webcasts in all six official languages, since all Main Committee meetings already had interpretation coverage. He made some practical suggestions as to how that situation might be rectified without causing any disruption.

14. **Ms. Tambunan** (Indonesia) noted that the Department of Public Information had used new media platforms to disseminate information on key issues. She urged the Organization to enhance its strategy in that regard, especially to reach young people. Traditional media still played a pivotal role in many parts of the world, however, and such media should continue to be used in communicating the work of the United Nations to the public. Efforts must also be made to narrow the digital divide and enhance cooperation in order to give people greater access to information. Because the media could be the messengers of either peace and tolerance or misunderstanding and hatred, the Department had a responsibility to make the global mass media aware of the need to project a culture of peace and tolerance and to combat prejudice and stereotyping.

15. It was essential to continue to raise international awareness concerning the question of Palestine with a view to supporting efforts to achieve a just and lasting peace in the Middle East. She acknowledged the contribution made by the Department to publicizing the issue through the United Nations website and through its annual training programme for Palestinian media professionals and encouraged the Department to continue its work in that area, including by organizing activities to mark the annual International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People.

16. As a troop-contributing country, Indonesia welcomed the ongoing cooperation between the Department of Public Information, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Department of Field Support in publicizing the work of peacekeepers, which would enhance the public image of the United Nations and the effectiveness of peacekeeping missions. United Nations information centres could also play an important role in communicating information about peacekeeping operations to vast populations around the world. The work of the Peacebuilding Commission should likewise be made known to the public.

17. The use of all official languages in United Nations publications and the publication of United Nations documents in non-official languages were

crucial for reaching the widest possible audience; efforts to that end were to be applauded.

18. **Mr. Sahraei** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that the most important mission of the Department of Public Information should be to provide accurate, impartial and timely information to the public on the tasks and responsibilities of the United Nations, in order to strengthen international support for its activities. Since the Committee on Information played an important role in examining United Nations public information policies and activities, closer cooperation with the Department was needed.

19. He commended the Secretariat's role in organizing the commemoration of the International Day of Nowruz on 22 March 2012, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 64/253, and encouraged the Department to continue to promote awareness of the event.

20. The revolution in information and communication technology had greatly increased the possibilities for disseminating and sharing information and knowledge, but there was a widening gap between developed and developing countries. It was regrettable that certain developed countries, taking advantage of their monopoly of modern communication technology, were constantly trying to distort facts and fabricate events, especially in relation to developing countries.

21. In an unjustifiable move, certain Western countries had decided to impose a ban on the broadcasting of 19 Iranian satellite television and radio channels in Europe. His Government strongly condemned that action, which was a clear violation of international law and a flagrant contradiction of any claims to be defending freedom of speech and freedom of the press. It urged the countries concerned to respect the principles of freedom and democracy and to take immediate action to reverse their decision. It also called upon the relevant United Nations organs, especially the Department of Public Information, to protect the right to freedom of opinion and expression.

22. Given the serious deterioration in the humanitarian and economic situation of the innocent Palestinian people, the Department had an important responsibility to raise international awareness regarding the question of Palestine.

23. His delegation called upon the Department to use its worldwide presence to foster respect for all religions and cultural values. Promoting dialogue among civilizations and cultures would greatly increase mutual understanding and DPI should promote that concept in the activities of the United Nations in various fields.

24. The 63 United Nations information centres around the world were the real interface between the United Nations and the international community and had a crucial role to play in enhancing the Organization's public image. Better coordination between the centres and host countries, the provision of new information and communication technologies and the allocation of adequate resources to them, as well as careful attention to the cultural, social and economic characteristics of different regions, were all elements that should be taken duly into account.

25. His delegation fully supported efforts to create a linguistically more equal world, with information disseminated not only in the official languages of the United Nations but also in those local languages that were widely regarded as the roots of great cultures and civilizations, including Persian, which was a unique source of integrity and solidarity among several nations.

26. **Mr. Rabiu** (Nigeria) encouraged the Department of Public Information to continue its laudable work of disseminating information about the work of the United Nations all over the world. That would no doubt require greater deployment of resources, especially in the area of information and communication technology (ICT). In that area, the Department should take into account the varying degree of development of ICT use between developing and developed countries and should not suddenly abandon more traditional means of communication, such as radio.

27. His delegation noted with satisfaction the role played by the Department in creating awareness of the Rio+20 Summit, as demonstrated by the increased participation of a number of major stakeholders across the developing world, the high volume of media coverage of the Summit and the intense online discussions on it on United Nations social media platforms. The Department had also worked with Nigeria on launching the Millennium Development Goals 2012 awareness-raising initiative and had helped raise awareness of and support for the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) through its "Africa Renewal" programme.

28. As a troop-contributing country, Nigeria stressed the importance of the work done by the Department to promote awareness of United Nations peacekeeping operations. Close cooperation was needed between the Department of Public Information and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations.

29. **Mr. Ri Kwang Nam** (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) said that, while some countries were cooperating in the area of public information, others were taking advantage of the latest communication technology to spread their values and alien lifestyle to other countries and even instigate regime change. The so-called "Radio Free Asia" was one such example. The United States of America was using all forms of government-controlled mass media to launch large-scale psychological warfare intended to cause internal unrest and overturn the systems of sovereign States, under the disguise of "freedom of speech".

30. Such acts constituted a grave violation of the United Nations Charter and other relevant international laws defining the principle of respect for sovereignty and non-interference in internal affairs. International public information activities should serve the sound social development of each country and the building of relations among States. United Nations Member States should observe the principle of impartiality and objectivity and strongly reject the base political objectives pursued by some countries using government-controlled public information media.

31. The ever-widening gap between developed and developing countries in their level of ICT development was also cause for concern. Since ICT development remained in the hands of a small number of countries, those countries had a responsibility to assist developing countries by taking such measures as the transfer of modern ICT.

32. **Mr. Alzayani** (Bahrain) said that the Department of Public Information had played an important role in conveying the image of the United Nations to people everywhere and providing information about its activities and the hopes and aspirations of the international community. It had raised awareness about such important events and issues as the Rio+20 Summit, the Millennium Development Goals, International Women's Day and Nelson Mandela International Day. The United Nations information centres were also important for disseminating information and organizing United Nations-related activities and events.

33. Since the Department was the voice of the United Nations in the world, there must be parity among the Organization's six official languages in all its discussions and information materials, which, so far as possible, should also include other non-official languages.

34. He stressed the importance of traditional media for providing information and raising public awareness about the United Nations, especially in developing countries, where state-of-the-art media were often not available. The proposal for an annual World Radio Day was an indication of that importance. The "new, more just and more effective world information and communication order" called for by General Assembly resolution 34/182 might be achieved when it became possible to narrow the digital divide between developing and developed countries.

35. He urged the Department to continue its information activities under the special information programme on the question of Palestine until a just solution to that question was achieved.

36. **Mr. Valero Briceño** (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) said that his delegation, while appreciating the work done by the Department in promoting a wider understanding of the aims and achievements of the United Nations, believed that such work would be more representative if its message were disseminated in all six official languages of the Organization.

37. Recalling that the Seventh Conference of Ministers of Information of Non-Aligned Countries, held in Venezuela in July 2008, had reaffirmed the commitment to build a development-oriented information society, his delegation observed with concern the digital divide between developed and developing countries. The Isla Margarita Declaration adopted at the Conference had called for the adoption of measures to democratize the use of ICT for the benefit of all peoples, in particular those from developing countries.

38. Venezuela was concerned about the biased campaigns launched by powerful international communication media, in the service of capital and imperial Powers, which distorted the realities of developing countries. Those campaigns were being used for propaganda purposes and did nothing to

promote respect for sovereignty, peace and solidarity among nations. Information media inaccurately described as "independent" demanded freedom of expression but infringed it daily. Communication media could be highly positive if placed at the service of social justice, truth, respect for cultural diversity and brotherhood among peoples, but they were harmful if used to perpetuate backwardness and ignorance and reinforce neo-colonial domination.

39. There was full and unrestricted freedom of expression in Venezuela. Public criticism and the discussion of ideas occurred freely, as could be seen from the recent election.

40. Like other developing countries, Venezuela was making progress in creating its own sovereign information and communication networks. The Simón Bolivar satellite, in orbit since October 2008, facilitated access to and the transmission of data via the Internet, telephone and television, meeting national telecommunications needs, particularly in remote regions. The new Miranda observation satellite, launched that month, would facilitate national planning in such areas as agriculture, urban development, industry, environment and water resources and monitor climate and the country's borders. It would also strengthen Latin American and Caribbean integration, in that the countries of the region could sign science and outer space cooperation agreements with Venezuela.

41. In 2009, digital telecommunications had been introduced in Venezuelan schools through the Conaima information technology education project, while since 2007 the Infocentros programme had been bringing the Internet to a wider public in order to develop local potential, social networks and people's power. The Bolivarian Revolution was promoting the creation of alternative and community means of communication in order to democratize access to information and raise the population's intellectual, cultural and educational level. Venezuela was ready to cooperate with the Department to promote the best causes of the peoples of the world.

42. **Mr. Uspenskiy** (Russian Federation) said that, as the Organization's volume of work grew, so too did its public information activities. In a context of limited resources, it was important to maximize coordination among the different offices of the United Nations so that information campaigns did not duplicate, but rather complemented, each other and to ensure that they used language that would be understood by all target audiences.

43. The key focus of public information activities should be to promote the universal human values on which the United Nations had been founded and publicize its efforts to achieve social progress, equality and justice. It was also important to preserve the historical memory of the Second World War and the lessons learned from it, particularly as one of the founding purposes of the United Nations had been to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war. It was a matter of concern that racial, ethnic and religious intolerance was on the increase in a number of countries, along with contemporary forms of Nazism, in many cases encouraged by the authorities.

44. Public information activities on the work of the United Nations required a balanced approach, using both new and traditional media. The principle of multilingualism should be respected and information should be adapted to each country and region. The Department's network of information centres had long proved their effectiveness in publicizing the Organization's work, the United Nations Information Centre in Moscow being a good example. His delegation welcomed the Department's efforts to develop television and radio broadcasting and to use digital Internet-based means of disseminating information. Russian-language output from United Nations Radio and the United Nations News Centre had traditionally been in high demand in many countries. The significant progress made in implementing the principle of multilingualism on the Organization's website, and in increasing the amount of information available and updating its format, was helping to attract a wider and younger audience.

45. Engaging with young people was one of the most important aspects of the Organization's public information work. His delegation was therefore pleased to note that the Global Model United Nations conferences had become truly global events and that the Academic Impact initiative was becoming increasingly popular. The values of the United Nations could also be promoted through a variety of international youth forums, such as the World University Games to be held in Kazan in 2013 and the Winter Olympic and Paralympic Games to be held in Sochi in 2014.

46. **Mr. Kogda** (Burkina Faso) said that the revolution in information and communication technologies offered immense potential for enhancing economic growth and social development and could play an important role in eliminating poverty in developing countries. For that reason, the various actors must intensify their efforts to close the digital divide between developed and developing countries and promote improved access to the new technologies for countries of the South, particularly in Africa. However, the new technologies should not be promoted to the detriment of traditional means of communication, notably radio, television and the print media, all of which should be supported.

47. His delegation welcomed the UNESCO proclamation of 13 February as World Radio Day, which would help draw the international community's attention to an irreplaceable communication tool that reached people in the most isolated parts of the world.

48. United Nations information centres played a valuable role in disseminating information and bringing the United Nations closer to the public. Burkina Faso had been host to one such centre in Ouagadougou for several decades; that centre also covered Chad, Mali and the Niger and played a vital warning and advocacy role on the specific concerns of those four countries, including poverty reduction, food security and natural disasters. It had also produced and disseminated information in several of the region's national languages.

49. The Committee on Information, which played an important role in the formulation of United Nations information policies and activities, should continue to support the capacity-building of information centres, particularly in developing countries. His delegation reiterated its appeal for increased human, material and budgetary resources for the Ouagadougou information centre to enable it to maintain and expand its activities.

50. **Mr. Sharaf** (Egypt) said that his delegation appreciated the efforts made by the Department in recent months to clarify the role of the United Nations with regard to substantive issues such as the question of Palestine, international development goals, nuclear non- proliferation, climate change, sustainable development, NEPAD, peacekeeping and UN-Women. It commended the Secretary-General's creative community outreach initiative, aimed at offering assistance to cinema and television professionals interested in producing features on issues relating to the work of the Organization, and reaffirmed its support for the Secretariat's efforts to find ways to bring together the United Nations and the entertainment industry with a view to mobilizing public opinion on global issues. It urged the holding of events in the Arab region and Africa for that purpose.

51. The Organization's increasing responsibility for strengthening international cooperation in the area of information, bridging the knowledge divide and establishing a more just and more objective world information order meant that the Department must constantly develop and update United Nations information activities in order to keep up with the spirit of the times, help disseminate reliable information and promote a culture of peace and tolerance.

52. While it supported the use of some United Nations information centres for publicizing the Organization's work via popular media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube, his delegation felt that there was a need for greater emphasis on radio, which remained one of the most widely appreciated services in developing countries, especially in rural and remote areas, and specifically on programmes broadcast in Arabic to Africa and the Middle East.

53. His delegation reaffirmed the importance of multilingualism, including on the Internet, and of striking a proper balance among the Organization's six official languages to permit the widest possible dissemination of information and promote dialogue and understanding among cultures. It looked forward to the continuing enhancement of the quality and content of the Department's coverage, within a framework characterized by focus, neutrality and the ability to influence, and to greater integration between DPI activities at Headquarters and the growing activities of information centres around the world. It reiterated its call for a stronger role for the main information centres in Cairo, Mexico City and Pretoria, closer cooperation between them and the national centres in their respective regions, expansion of the Organization's public information structure and enhancement of the level of work, especially in developing and least developed countries and conflict areas.

54. On the Organization's website, there were still some speed constraints in all six official languages and every effort should be made to simplify searches.

55. His delegation appreciated the ongoing efforts made by the Department to develop and update its methods for disseminating the United Nations message and supporting the Organization in achieving its purposes. It encouraged the Department to continue its programmes and activities on economic and social development in Member States, especially in Africa. It emphasized the importance of the Department's activities aimed at helping to bring about a just and comprehensive peace in the Middle East through the dissemination of information that faithfully reported developments on the ground and United Nations efforts to end the Israeli occupation of Arab lands occupied since 1967, enable the Palestinian people to establish an independent State with East Jerusalem as its capital and secure Israel's withdrawal from all occupied Syrian and Lebanese territory in accordance with the relevant international terms of reference, including the Arab peace initiative. In that connection, there should be greater focus on the current Palestinian bid for United Nations membership.

56. **Mr. Makanga** (Gabon), noting that there were still 16 Non-Self-Governing Territories in the world, said that it was vital that the United Nations step up its efforts to fill any information and training gaps in those Territories in order to permit their economic and social progress. His delegation praised the Department's activities in that regard and encouraged it to continue working with the administering Powers to that end.

57. At the same time, his delegation acknowledged the cross-cutting work done by the Department in all areas of United Nations activity and particularly encouraged the Department's initiatives with regard to sustainable development, climate change and the Millennium Development Goals. Like other African countries, Gabon was concerned that the Department should communicate complete and factual information on the conflict situations that were destroying peace and security in Africa.

58. His delegation welcomed the efforts that the Department was making to ensure equal and fair treatment for all the official languages of the United Nations. That was not only a legal requirement, but also strengthened the dialogue of cultures and civilizations among Member States.

59. He thanked the Department for helping to promote International Widows' Day, an initiative that would contribute to United Nations action to combat discrimination and violence against women. Lastly, his Government had made commendable efforts to bridge the digital divide and improve media access and was eager to develop its cooperation with the Department to that end.

60. *Mr. Messone (Gabon) (Chair) took the Chair.*

61. **Ms. Herity** (Secretary of the Committee) said that under the terms of operative paragraph 20 of draft resolution B relating to United Nations public information policies and activities, the General Assembly had reiterated its request to the Secretary-General to ensure that the Department of Public Information had appropriate staffing capacity in all the official languages of the United Nations to undertake all its activities and to include that aspect in future programme budget proposals for the Department, bearing in mind the principle of parity of all six official languages, while respecting the workload in each official language.

62. She drew the Committee's attention to the provisions of section VI of General Assembly resolution 45/248 B, in which the Assembly had reaffirmed that the Fifth Committee was the appropriate Main Committee of the Assembly entrusted with responsibilities for administrative and budgetary matters and reaffirmed also the role of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions.

63. It was envisaged that adoption of paragraph 20 would not entail any additional appropriation under the programme budget for the biennium 2012-2013. However, bearing in mind the principle of parity of all six official languages in the activities undertaken by the Department of Public Information while respecting the workload in each official language, additional financial implications were envisaged for 2014-2015 and were expected to be reviewed in the context of the budget for the biennium 2014-2015, in accordance with established budgetary procedures.

Action on draft resolutions contained in the Report of the Committee on Information

64. **The Chair** invited the Committee to take a decision on draft resolution A, entitled "Information in the service of humanity", contained in chapter IV, paragraph 38, of document A/67/21 and draft resolution B, entitled "United Nations public

information policies and activities", contained in the same document, as well as the draft decision on page 26 of the English text. He recalled that the Committee on Information had adopted the two draft resolutions and the draft decision by consensus.

65. If he heard no objection, he would take it that the Committee agreed to take a decision on draft resolutions A and B and the draft decision jointly.

66. *It was so decided.*

67. **The Chair** said that, if he heard no objection, he would take it that the Committee agreed to adopt draft resolutions A and B and the draft decision without a vote.

68. *Draft resolutions A and B and the draft decision contained in document A/67/21 were adopted.*

The meeting rose at 5 p.m.